



Environment Committee, January 31, 2011

Testimony in **support** of the following legislation:

H.B. No. 5202 (COMM) AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION.

H.B. No. 6156 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING FARMERS' MARKETS

Good afternoon Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and members the Environment Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide advocacy and outreach organization concerned with hunger and food security. Additionally, I am a member of the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Board and sit on the Steering Committee of the Working Lands Alliance. I am here today in support of HB 5202: An Act Authorizing the Issuance of Bonds for Farmland Preservation and HB 6156: An Act Concerning Farmer's Markets.

Last year there was over \$768,000 dollars in WIC Farmer Market and Senior Farmer Market Coupons redeemed – and extraordinarily high rate of redemption. These highly coveted coupons are used by those with limited incomes at Farmer's Markets for healthier and nutritious foods that are locally grown. Not only do the low-income have access to the locally grown food but farmers receive the additional business. It is in the best interest of the consumers to have a wide variety of choice and HB 6156 allows for that.

State policy can make it easier for these coupons to be redeemed, including, as laid out in this legislation, allowing farmers to use one food service permit for all the state's markets. Since the Farmer's Markets are coordinated through the Department of Agriculture it only makes sense to give farmers one point of entry, which would allow for time to be spent farming and not setting up appointments or gathering signatures.

HB 5202, An Act Concerning Farmland Preservation is an important piece of legislation that continues to allow Connecticut's farmers grow. As you've heard today, the last allocation of the current lump sum authorization for the purchase of development rights (PDR) will likely be \$5 million in late winter or early spring. The Connecticut Farmland Preservation program has protected 283 farms with a total of 37,262 acres – it works. Just in 2010 alone, 1,371 acres on 16 farms were protected.

This program allows farmers to invest in their farms and to grow their business. As you are aware, Connecticut's agriculture is a \$3.5 billion industry and farmland is the foundation of the industry. This is the ultimate in job creation legislation; employment opportunities can be increased, investments are made in farms in order for them to grow, all while our Connecticut way of life is retained. Locally sourced food is good for the economy, and good for our health. This legislation continues Connecticut down a very successful route to keeping it local.

These two pieces of legislation really work hand in hand to help get fresh, nutritious and local foods to everyone in the state. I heard the other day that more people are eating at home and preparing their own meals. We need to assist them in any way possible to increase the health and well-being of our citizenry and these two pieces of legislation put us on the right track.

Thank you.